

2009

KIEDRICH
GRÄFENBERG

WEINGUT
**ROBERT
WEIL**

RIESLING
TROCKENBEERENAUSLESE



The Robert Weil Wine Estate 1910



Dr. Robert Weil (1843–1923)

The manor's period rooms from 1878
(used for tastings, presentations, and events)



The Wine Estate - Tradition

Weingut Robert Weil was founded in 1875 amidst fortuitous circumstances. The founder, Dr. Robert Weil, was a professor of German at the Sorbonne but was forced to leave Paris because of the pending Franco-Prussian War (1870/1871). His decision to work as a journalist in Wiesbaden, not far from the Rheingau, was doubtlessly influenced by the fact that his brother August was the minister and choir director of the parish church in Kiedrich. Dr. Weil purchased his first vineyards in Kiedrich, and he moved there in 1875, when he bought the estate manor from the heirs of Sir John Sutton, an English baronet.

Sutton was from a wealthy, old aristocratic family in Lincolnshire county. He came to Kiedrich in 1857, fell in love with the village, and became its greatest patron in the years thereafter. In addition to establishing social and charitable institutions, he strived to restore elements of Kiedrich's Gothic heritage by funding the renovation of the church, which has one of Germany's oldest organs. He also set up a foundation to maintain its choir, famous to this day for its German rendition of Gregorian chants.

When he moved to Kiedrich, Dr. Robert Weil decided to expand his small vineyard holdings into a wine estate. A man of vision, he built up the estate by purchasing the property of two local wine estates and additional vineyards from the Count of Fürstenberg. Today the estate is managed with the same spirit of enterprise by the fourth generation of the founding family.

. . . and Modern Times

The Rheingau is a unique, self-contained region on the Rhine where the man-made landscape and the vine are at one. Its long viticultural tradition was established by monasteries and large aristocratic wine estates. Despite its demands on soil and climate, the Riesling grape thrives here and is inextricably linked with the Rheingau and its viticulture.

Weingut Robert Weil, one of the region's younger estates, is located in the heart of Kiedrich, a village first documented in 950. Its profile is marked by the artworks and architecture of the Gothic parish church St. Valentine, aristocratic Gothic, Renaissance manors, and the tower of Scharfenstein castle, a former residence of the electors and archbishops of Mainz.

The estate cultivates 75 ha (185 acres) of vineyards planted with Riesling (99 %) and Pinot Noir (1 %) grapes. Wilhelm Weil, the great-grandson of the estate's founder, carries on the tradition of uncompromising, quality-oriented practices in the vineyards and in the cellars.

The historical manor house, the ultra-modern cellars and the vinothek stand side by side in a beautiful park – the same synthesis of old and new that is reflected in the estate's philosophy of winemaking.



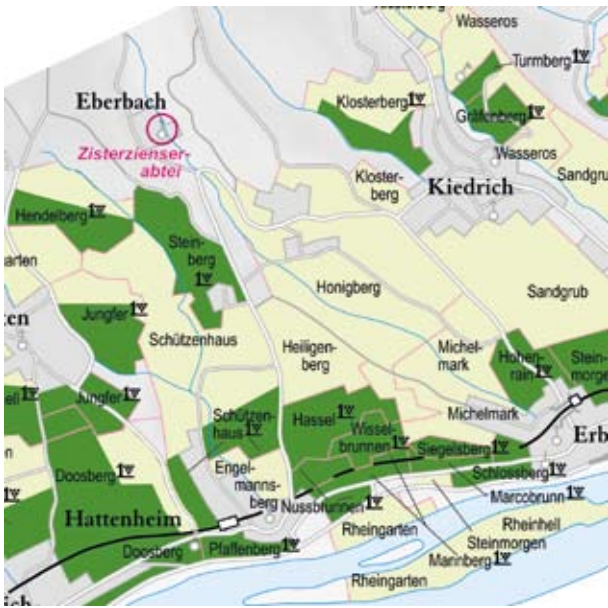
Southern view of the manor with the Gothic church St. Valentine in the background



Wilhelm Weil

The wine estate, in the heart of Kiedrich





Hillside Sites

Although the Rheingau is one of Germany's smaller wine-growing regions, its 3,100 ha (7,660 acres) of vineyards are vastly diverse in their geological makeup. They can be divided into three zones: vineyards in proximity to the Rhine, vineyards on the higher reaches of the middle plateau, and vineyards on the heights at the foothills of the Taunus Hills. Among these high-lying sites (up to 240 m/780 ft in altitude) surrounding Kiedrich lie the three steep hillside sites of Weingut Robert Weil: *Kiedricher Klosterberg*, *Kiedricher Turmberg* and *Kiedricher Gräfenberg*. The microclimate of these three southwest-facing sites is excellent, with perfect exposure to the sun and correspondingly high temperatures as well as good circulation from the Taunus winds drawn into the Rhine Valley.



The hillside sites *Kiedricher Klosterberg* (foreground), *Kiedricher Turmberg* and *Kiedricher Gräfenberg* (from left to right)

Furthermore, the vines are able to permeate the stony soils and develop deep roots, while the water-retaining soil layers ensure the vines a good water supply. Inclination (up to 60 %), exposure (southwest) and the ability of the barren stony soils to absorb heat are the factors that make for three perfect Riesling sites. These conditions, as well as ideal circulation, enable the grapes to remain on the vine for a long time, ripening well into November. Wines made from the loose clusters of small, intensely flavored berries are picture-perfect Riesling wines with a fine acidity and distinctive mineral tone. At the same time, they are marked by elegance and finesse.

Classification

Vineyard classification in the Rheingau has a long tradition. Our hillside sites *Kiedricher Klosterberg* and *Kiedricher Turmberg* are “Erste Lagen” in the ranking of Premier Cru and the *Kiedricher Gräfenberg* is “Grosse Lage” in the ranking of Grand Cru.

The tradition of demarcating exceptional vineyard sites has long been practiced in all significant wine-growing regions of the world. So, too, in the Rheingau, where certain vineyard sites have always had an excellent reputation and an international following. As of 1498, when Kloster Eberbach’s cellar inventory first referred to special *crescentia* as “growths from special sites,” vineyard names have had a special significance in the Rheingau.



Imperial menu card and the 1893 *Kiedricher Gräfenberg* Auslese

Dahlen’s vineyard appraisal map of the Rheingau (1885)



In 1788, Thomas Jefferson made the first ranking of the Rheingau’s vineyard sites, and in 1814, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe noted in his Rheingau diary: “The quality of a wine depends upon the vineyard site.” Johann Philipp Bronner and Wilhelm Hamm published their “ranking of Rheingau wines and sites per se” in 1836 and 1865, respectively.

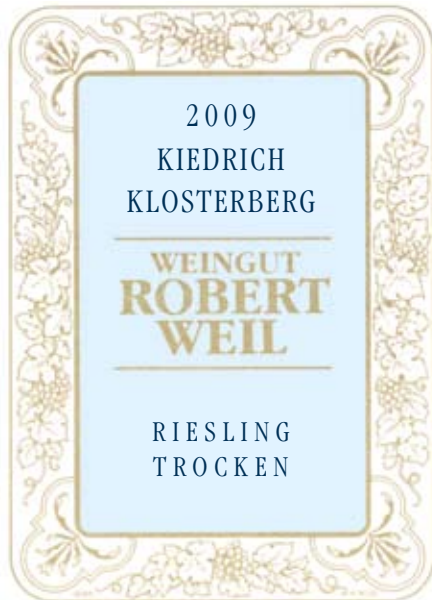
In the aftermath of the Bordeaux classification of 1855, and after 1866, when many German wine-growing regions came under Prussian rule, a number of vineyard appraisal, or classification, maps were published. The Rheingau began its classification in 1885. The cartographer and author of the accompanying book

was Heinrich Wilhelm Dahlen, the general secretary of the German Wine-growers’ Association. His map was based on the quality of the soil and property tax revenue generated by individual sites. Vineyards with the highest assessment, such as *Kiedricher Gräfenberg*, were marked in dark red.

This was at a time when Rheingau Riesling wines experienced a heyday at home and abroad and the finest, such as *Gräfenberg*, were celebrated as “Grands Crus made in Germany.” Since the start of the 21st century, German- and Rheingau-Riesling wines have experienced a worldwide renaissance of this glorious image.



Kiedricher Klosterberg (in the foreground)



Klosterberg: high proportion of stones mixed with loess



Kiedrich Klosterberg

The name *Klosterberg* (literally, monastery hill) derives from “Closterweg,” the old path that ran through this vineyard in Kiedrich en route between the monastery Kloster Eberbach and its mill near Eltville.

The shallow to deep stony-gritty soils of the southwest-facing site are of Devonian (colored slate) and pre-Devonian (phyllite and sericite gneiss) origin, and are mixed with gravelly loess.

Overall, but particularly in its hillside sites, the Rheingau is geologically diverse, as manifested in the *Klosterberg* site – one of but many microcosms that make up the entire region. The numerous rock formations throughout the region reflect its eventful geological history, the origins of which can be traced primarily to the sediment formations of the Mainz Basin, a prehistoric sea that covered the region some 400 million years ago.

The *Klosterberg*'s fine, fertile earth derives from its slate content. Slate weathers easily. The sericite gneiss (low in mineral nutrients, but adds volume and power to the finished wine) is of volcanic origin from the Silurian Period. It is found exclusively in the hillside sites of the Rheingau.

Phyllite (metamorphic clayish slate), present in all three Weil hillside sites in varying degrees, is characteristic in the eastern portion of the Rheingau, where it forms a ridge situated between the Rhine and the Taunus Hills. These soils are rich in minerals. As they weather, they ensure an ongoing supply of minerals to the soil.

The various soils and rock formations within the Weil hillside sites account for the different taste profiles of the wines from the three sites. *Klosterberg*: full-bodied, even baroque in character; *Turmberg*: fine, mineral-rich tones; *Gräfenberg*: mineral-fruity notes with a long finish.

Kiedrich Turmberg

Since the founding of Weingut Robert Weil, the *Turmberg* site was always considered one of the estate's top sites, second only to *Gräfenberg*.

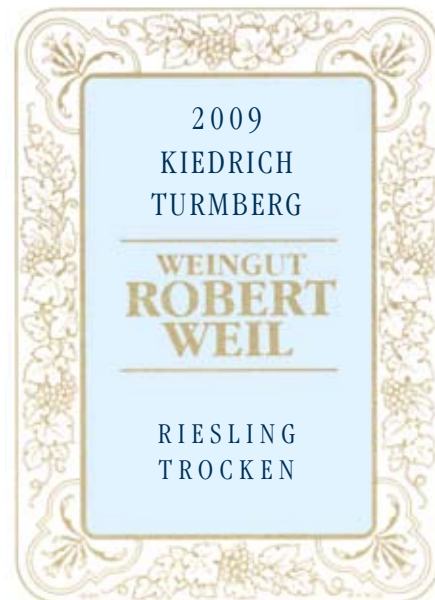
The name *Turmberg* (literally, tower hill) derives from the surviving keep (central tower) of the former castle Burg Scharfenstein. The archbishops of Mainz had the fortress built on the steep crag (240 m/780 ft in altitude) northeast of Kiedrich in 1160. With it, the Rheingau sovereigns hoped to secure the eastern flank of the Rheingau as well as the important trade route that ran from Eltville to Limburg and Cologne. Cologne was a very important trade center in the Middle Ages, particularly for European wine. Other sources contend that the fortress was built to protect the neighboring hill *Gräfenberg*. After being cleared in 1109, it was planted with vines. The fortress was ultimately named after the "Scharfensteiner" – those who administered the property on behalf of the archbishops of Mainz. Scharfenstein's tower and the double, six-spoked wheels in Mainz's coat of arms have been depicted in Kiedrich's seal and coat of arms since the Middle Ages.

With the wine law of 1971 and its amendment of the vineyard register, numerous traditional vineyards, like *Turmberg*, were incorporated into other sides. In 2005, the *Turmberg* parcel was reinstated as an individual vineyard site consisting of 3.8 ha (9.4 acres). It is solely owned by Weingut Robert Weil.

Turmberg lies on the slopes of a steep, slaty crag. Its stony-gritty soils consist primarily of phyllite mixed with small portions of loess and loam.



View of the *Kiedricher Turmberg* site

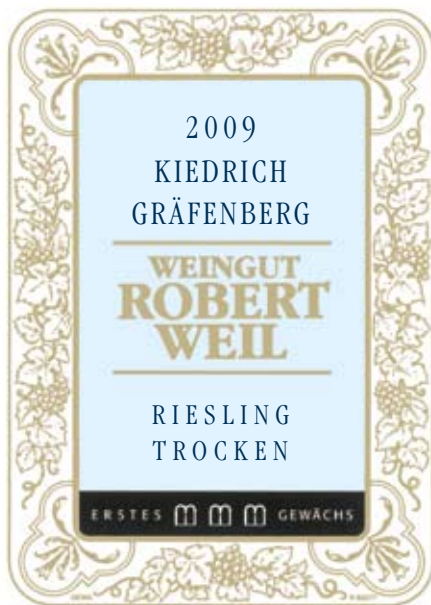


Turmberg: high proportion of phyllite slate

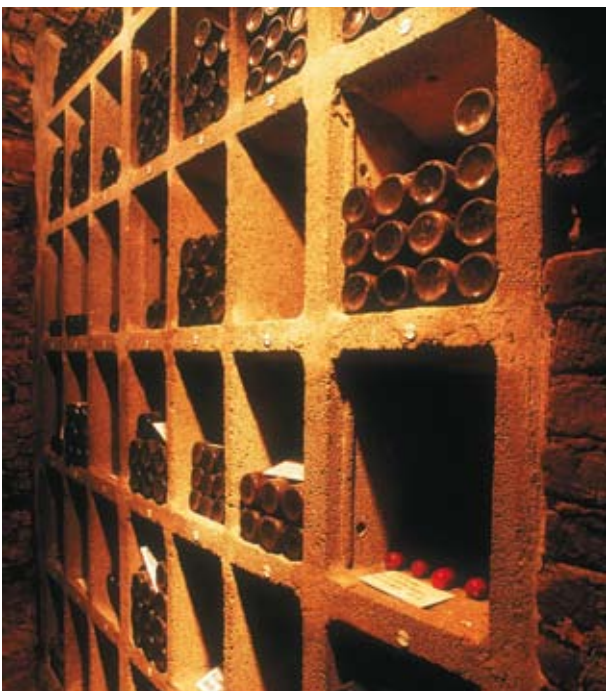




Kiedricher Turmberg (left) and Kiedricher Gräfenberg (right)



Gräfenberg wines in the treasure chamber



Kiedrich Gräfenberg

At the end of the 12th century, the renowned site was first documented as “mons rhingravii” (literally, the hill of the Rhine counts) and in 1258, was named “Grevenberg.”

By the late 19th century and in the early 20th century, when Rhine Rieslings were highly esteemed, the Gräfenberg Rieslings of the Dr. Robert Weil estate were enjoyed in the courts of European emperors and kings as “grands crus of German origin” as well as by Europe’s upper middle classes in distinguished hotels throughout Europe, from St. Petersburg to Prague, Vienna, Berlin, Paris and London.

A *Gräfenberg* Riesling from the 1893 vintage helped spread Weingut Robert Weil’s renown far beyond the borders of Kiedrich. In 1900, the royal court of Austria purchased 800 bottles of 1893 *Kiedricher Gräfenberg* Auslese at sixteen gold marks per bottle – an astonishing price even in those days, when Rheingau Rieslings were already the most expensive growths in the world of wine.

To this day, *Gräfenberg* has remained a focal point. The record prices it fetches at auctions conducted by the VDP as well as international auction houses, such as Christie’s, bear witness to the site’s renown. *Gräfenberg* is the only site in the world in which grapes of every quality category – including Eiswein and Trockenbeerenauslese – have been harvested every year without exception since the 1989 vintage.

The stony-gritty soils of the *Gräfenberg* are deep to medium-deep. Phyllite is a major component, interspersed with loess and loam. This soil composition, with its high proportion of stones and water-retaining layers, provides the site with an optimal and balanced water supply.

Work in the Vineyards

The quality and unmistakable identity of a wine originate in the vineyard. The renown of a site, which is determined by historical as well as microclimatic and geological circumstances, plays a role, but strict quality-oriented vineyard management is the decisive factor.

The vineyards of Weingut Robert Weil number among the Rheingau's finest sites. The vines range in age up to more than 50 years and plant density is from 5,000 to 6,000 vines per hectare (ca. 2.5 acres). They are cultivated in an environmentally-friendly manner, i.e. organic fertilizer is used as needed; green cover is planted in alternating rows to optimize the humus content of the soil; herbicides are not used; plant protection measures are used sparingly and with respect for the habitat of useful organisms.

Stringent pruning to control yields, thinning after blossoming, halving and/or discarding bunches, and careful canopy management are all part of the estate's quality-oriented philosophy.

Maintaining low yields and achieving a fully-ripened crop are self-imposed goals. As such, the harvest seldom begins before October and continues for at least eight to ten weeks. During this time, the grapes are harvested by hand, with an extremely critical selection that involves up to seventeen rounds through the vineyards. The goal is to reap the finest fruit possible to make Riesling wines of every Prädikat level, including Eiswein and Trockenbeerenauslese – a goal that has been realized every year without exception since the 1989 vintage.



Vineyards on the »Kiedricher Berg«



Selective harvesting, by hand

Freshly harvested grapes ready for whole-cluster pressing



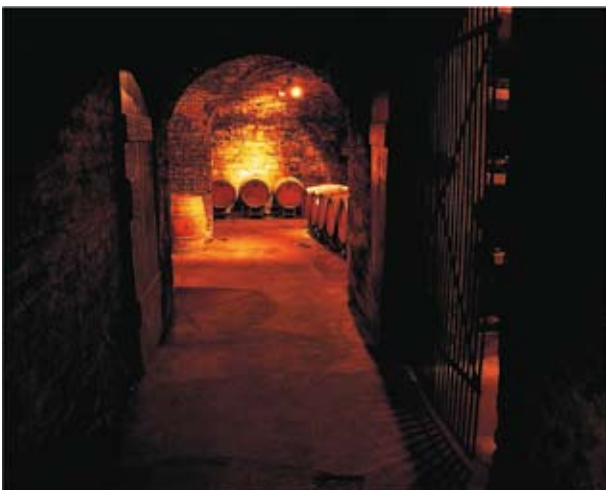


Casks cellar (traditional Rheingau-casks »Stückfass«)



Stainless steel tanks in old vaulted cellars

Entrance to the treasure chamber and barrique cellar



Work in the Cellar

Weingut Robert Weil has the same high standards for operations in the vineyard and in the cellar. The most modern technical know-how is combined with proven methods of traditional winemaking to preserve and fully realize the potential of what nature provides.

Harvested grapes are handled as gently as possible, starting with their journey from the vineyards to the cellars. Natural sedimentation is used to fine the must, after which oenologists decide whether the juice is best processed in stainless steel tanks or traditional oak casks. Fermentation is temperature controlled, strictly monitored, and lasts from six to twelve weeks. If natural sweetness is to be retained, fermentation is interrupted through temperature reduction. This results in a very fine residual sweetness derived from fructose.

Further vinification takes place in stainless steel tanks of varying sizes (depending on the size of an individual lot) and in traditional mature oak casks ("Rheingauer Stückfass": 1,200 liters). Yeast contact and stirring (bâtonnage) is also used. After a slow fermentation and aging, the wines are sterile filtered and bottled as gentle as possible in order to retain the wonderful primary grape aromas and for additional aging in the bottle.

Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) wines undergo an open fermentation on the skins, malolactic fermentation and aging in various types of barrique casks.

All of the vinification techniques outlined above are designed to ensure that the quality harvested in the vineyard is reflected in the quality of the finished product.

The Wines

High-quality vineyards are indispensable to producing first-class wines. It is a challenge to exploit the natural potential of the best sites.

The Robert Weil portfolio ranges from “Gutswein” and “Ortswein” (basic quality wines bottled under the Weil estate label) to the Rieslings from an “Erste Lage” (top site), such as *Kiedricher Klosterberg* and *Kiedricher Turmberg*, and “Grosse Lage” (finest top site), such as *Kiedricher Gräfenberg*. This distinction marks a return to the practice of a century ago when only the finest wines bore the name of a specific vineyard site; all others were sold under village or domain names. The estate guarantees the quality of both, but wines labelled with an individual vineyard name also have unique, site-specific qualities.

The character of Robert Weil Riesling wines is marked by the mineral-rich slate soils. They are elegant, complex wines with a pronounced fruitiness and many nuances in flavor and bouquet. Vinified in lively dry and full-bodied dry or sweeter styles, they are excellent partners with food or delightful on their own. The wines embody a perfect interplay of fine, but firm, acidity with natural sweetness and extract.

The balance of these components is the hallmark of the Riesling grape – an incredibly diverse varietal that is appealing both as a young, uncomplicated wine or a full-bodied, complex dry wine or a mature Auslese with enormous aging potential. Riesling: wines with a distinctive character for wine lovers around the world.

The estate’s dedication to Riesling since 1875 has led numerous observers of the international wine world to regard Weingut Robert Weil, with its “château character,” as a worldwide symbol of German Riesling culture.



Vinothek



Weil - distinctive blue labels recognized worldwide

Farewell!





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